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# Resilience as thriving: The role of positive leadership practices

Dusya Vera, Codou Samba, Dejun Tony Kong, Tiffany Maldonado

The COVID-19 global health crisis, with its human and economic consequences, has skyrocketed the interest in the concept of resilience. In *Reorganize for Resilience*, Professor Ranjay Gulati examined trends across three recessions in the US and concluded that about 60% of firms survived the recessions through drastic downturns, while the remaining 40% did not survive. One group of survivors focused on conservation and preservation; they hunkered down, conserved resources, slashed costs, and waited for the storm to pass. The second group (about 5–10% of survivors) propelled themselves far ahead of their rivals and turned adversity into opportunity. While the first group survived and bounced back, the second group survived and thrived amid similar adversity. The book mentions La Farge, Starbucks, Best Buy, and Jones Lang LaSalle, among others, as firms that prosper in good and bad times. Another notable piece of information about endurance is that when comparing the 1955 and 2019 Fortune 500 companies, only 52 companies (10.4%) appear in both lists and have remained on the list since it started, including Colgate-Palmolive, Campbell Soup Company, General Motors, and IBM.

The question we address in this article is: *What leadership practices shape the ability of a firm to not only bounce back from adversity, but also to thrive despite adversity?* We use a positive leadership perspective to look at the combination of positive leadership resources and organizational resilience capabilities that support thriving. Positive leadership is associated with positive deviance, that is, intentional behaviors and actions that depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways and that are associated with human and organizational excellence. While negative deviance (e.g., fraud, bullying, abusive supervision) has received the bulk of research attention, with a positive lens, we can shed light on opportunities, growth, generative processes, and strength-building experiences that come with obstacles and problems. We embrace the definition of thriving

from the Center for Positive Organizations at the University of Michigan: “To thrive requires (1) actualizing human potential in an organization so that people are purposeful, energized, engaged, resilient, and able to draw upon their strengths, and (2) intentional design of structures that work to mobilize positive connections, positive emotions, positive meanings, and other resources that can be directed toward purpose-driven excellence.”

We argue that moving from the idea of “resilience as bouncing back to normal” to the idea of “resilience as thriving” requires a combination of resources and capabilities. In terms of resources, Professor Kim Cameron introduced the term “positive leadership” and described it as the development and use of four socio-psychological resources: a positive climate, positive relationships, positive communication, and positive meaning. In terms of capabilities, we discuss an organization’s ability to Assess, Accept, and Adapt. Leveraging these resources and capabilities in tandem in a mutually-reinforcing way contributes to the creation of a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define organizational life, with an emphasis on an affirmative bias. We build largely on the stories of Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI), InterMune, and Reuters to exemplify organizational resilience as thriving.

This article challenges our knowledge of resilience, which has two current deficiencies: (1) while managers generally accept the notion that leadership is instrumental in designing organizational resilience, the specific leadership practices that contribute to thriving have not been made explicit; and (2) while the words resilience, bouncing back, and thriving are often used interchangeably, we know little about what it takes to go beyond return to normal operations to actually turning risks and uncertainty into opportunities for growth. We address these issues by describing how positive leadership develops and leverages specific resources and capabilities for thriving.

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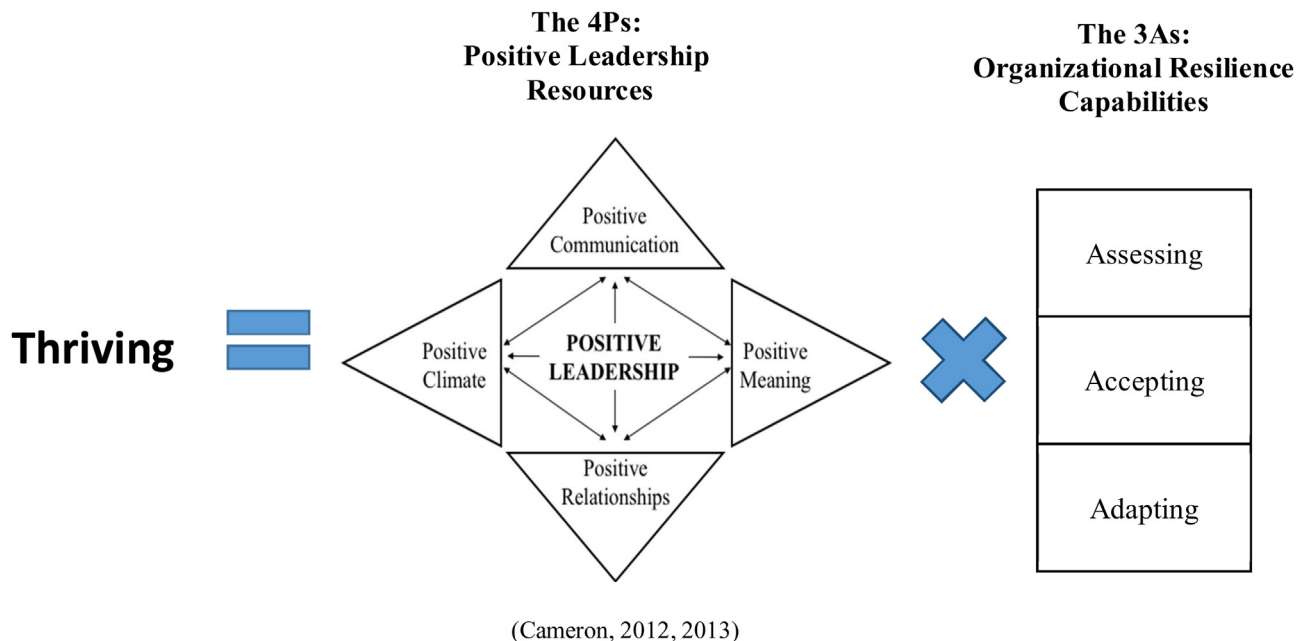
## RESILIENCE AS BOUNCING BACK AND RESILIENCE AS THRIVING

Resilience is a characteristic of individuals and collectives. The literature on individual resilience is vast and includes coping strategies and factors, such as external support, inner strengths, as well as interpersonal and problem-solving skills, which often are resources needed for individuals' appraisal of and coping with adversity. Individual resilience is the ability of individuals to absorb the stress that arises from adversity to function back to a "normal" level (what we refer to as "bouncing back after adversity") and to emerge from the adversity stronger than before (what we refer to as "thriving despite adversity").

Organizational resilience generally refers to a firm's ability to absorb strain or maintain functioning in the face of adverse events, such as financial crises, natural disasters, and operational disruptions. The emphasis has largely been on preventing, mitigating and eliminating the risks, uncertainty, and problems associated with adversity at the lowest possible cost and in the shortest time. In line with

the pervasive mindset of organizational research towards problem solving and economic efficiency, most work on organizational resilience has focused on developing preventive systems, policies, and procedures to identify serious systemic flaws, why these flaws exist, and how they can be reduced or eliminated. Various factors that help firms return to normal functioning after crises include slack resources, strategic human resource management systems, and information processing and control systems, among others.

Other organizational resilience discussions focus on the multiple tangible and intangible resources that firms need to acquire in order to anticipate and mitigate disruptions. In fact, Professor Trenton Williams and his colleagues categorize resources for resilience into financial (e.g., cash flow, financial reserves, total budget), cognitive (e.g., safety mindset, innovation, creative involvement), behavioral (e.g., HR policies and practices, board risk-oversight practices, safety policies), emotion-regulation (e.g., mindfulness, communication, self-efficacy), and relational resources (trust, bridging strategies, consortium support).



	Assessing	Accepting	Adapting
Positive Meaning			
Positive Climate			
Positive Communication			
Positive Relationships			

**Figure 1** Matrix of Resources and Capabilities for Thriving

In the last decades, the Positive Organizational Scholarship field has proposed that resilience as thriving is associated with abundance and vitality. Increasing attention is given to those companies that not only survive, but thrive after adversity. This research turns the negative into a positive and highlights positive features or antecedents of thriving, such as social capital and relationships, communication and psychological capital. The premise is that because preventive measures and procedures are intended to reduce risks and uncertainty, they do not work well in helping firms thrive after adversity. Overall, a growing body of literature moves beyond restoration to status quo and includes the development of new or extended resources and capabilities for keeping pace with change, and even creating new opportunities.

## RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES FOR THRIVING

Figure 1 depicts our model of thriving, which integrates four positive leadership resources and three organizational resilience capabilities. We describe these resources and capabilities separately and then combine them in the next sections by using EDSI, InterMune, and Reuters as examples. We also provide a matrix as a tool to apply this framework.

### The 4Ps: Positive Leadership Resources

As mentioned earlier, positive leadership is a concept introduced by Professor Kim Cameron, who described it in terms of implementing four positive leadership strategies (4Ps): (1) cultivating a positive climate, which refers to the condition in which shared positive experiences, emotions, and interpretations prevail within a firm; (2) fostering positive relationships, which refers to interpersonal interactions that promote vitality, enrichment, and learning; (3) encouraging positive communication, which occurs when a language of affirmation and support replaces negative, derogatory, or harsh language; and (4) creating positive meaning, which refers to the condition in which individuals pursue a profound purpose and find significant meaning in their work.

Positive leadership resources create a foundation for thriving. For example, a positive climate creates a context that counters the human tendency to focus on the negative, threatening, or problematic aspects of the environment, and emphasizes opportunities and positive emotions, such as gratitude, compassion, and forgiveness. Positive relationships are implemented through positive energy networks, wherein individuals give developmental feedback to each other, support and are supported by others, and identify those who are positive energizers to make them central to the network. Positive energizers create and support vitality in others and uplift and boost their colleagues. Relatedly, positive communication conveys corrective feedback in a supportive way and mitigates dysfunctional conflict. Indeed, too much positivity when giving feedback can foster complacency and mediocrity, whereas negativity can lead to defensiveness and withdrawal. Supportive communication practices avoid defensiveness and disconfirmation, make problem-oriented statements and validate other people. Finally, positive meaning is created by highlighting the benefits a firm produces for stakeholders, by associating work outcomes with their core values, and by identifying the long-term impact of their work.

The notion of the positive leadership resources is consistent with the concept of “The Flourishing Triangle” proposed by Professor Jane Dutton. She describes thriving as being in a state of optimal functioning, engaged, committed, and feeling vital. In this triangle, the three conditions that contribute to thriving are: positive emotions (e.g., joy, gratitude, serenity, pride, or awe), positive connections or relationships (e.g., moments of interaction—virtually or face-to-face—that provide a sense of mutuality and positive regard) and positive meaning (e.g., interpreting people, groups, and situations with a sense of value of worth or significance). The goal is for these resources to be part of the social infrastructure of the organization and be incorporated in the culture, routines, roles, systems, and networks.

### The EDSI Case

A company that has developed positive resources is Michigan-based EDSI (Educational Data Systems, Inc.), which is a national workforce development, talent solutions, and consulting firm. The company’s values can be summarized with three words: “Show Up, Smile, and Support.” Kevin Schneiders is the CEO of EDSI and he also calls himself the Chief Servant Leader. EDSI has developed many practices and routines that mobilize the four positive resources. One of these practices is town halls, which particularly support positive communication and positive relationships. Kevin Schneiders meets with each person in the organization once per year, in groups of 10 or less. Employees are invited to share one thing they are excited about that is upcoming in the next 80 days, personally or professionally. Schneiders takes note of these events in his calendar and acknowledges them as they are happening to build meaningful connections and positive emotions. Schneiders also keeps tracks of these stories over time as they become part of the collective memory to deepen relationships and networks. This practice was particularly relevant for Schneiders during the COVID-19 global health crisis, because his calendar included all the events that were considered important for his employees, and that ended up being cancelled. Reaching out to his employees at this time was particularly meaningful to them.

EDSI has also developed positive relations in the form of formal and informal networks. For example, in Functional Improvement Teams (FIT), employees are asked to solve problems that leaders cannot solve, with the belief that leaders do not have all the answers and everybody can be a meaningful contributor. Team members come from different locations and work together for closely 10 weeks to solve a problem given to them by leadership. These teams unlock resources for creativity and allow many people to make meaningful contributions to tough challenges. Ninety-five percent of the time EDSI implements the proposals. In the midst of the COVID-19 health crisis, the practice of having FITs prepared EDSI to turn over to employees the challenges of virtual work, for example. Individuals knew from the past that the teams were respected and that answers and solutions could be shared with transparency.

Other positive leadership practices implemented at EDSI during the COVID-19 crisis are the following. Even in the midst of virtual work, EDSI maintains the positive climate and positive communication via weekly videos from Schneiders that highlight cultural values of being in service and

being part of the solution to this crisis. EDSI also continues deepening positive relationships because Schnieders continues to send fun, handwritten notes on cards for birthdays and anniversaries. In addition, EDSI embraces flexible schedules, cross-functional learning, and community service opportunities that allow for meaningful jobs, and positive meaning, even amidst adversity.

### The 3As: Organizational Resilience Capabilities

Having capabilities implies that the organization (or its parts) can perform a specific activity in a reliable, or at least in a minimally satisfactory, manner. In particular, dynamic capabilities enable a firm to change how it presently makes its living, including altering operational capabilities, the resource base of the firm, or features of the external environment. Organizational resilience is a dynamic capability because it changes how a firm operates during, and sometimes even after, adversity. As Professor Trenton Williams et al. state, an entity does not survive merely because of inner resources; rather it survives and thrives on the basis of its ability to adapt and/or dynamically relate to its environment. We propose that that an organizational resilience capability can be understood in terms of three processes—Assessing, Accepting, and Adapting (3As)—which help the firm to create, extend, or modify its base of positive leadership resources for thriving.

*Assessing* consists of scanning and interpreting the external environment. Researchers often focus on this process when discussing the prevention and mitigation of risks and uncertainty. This is because traditionally, the primary goal of assessing a crisis is to identify the potential difficulties stemming from the changes in the environment.

While assessing is focused on the external environment, *Accepting* has an internal focus. Accepting is a concept rooted in the Buddhist tradition, in which acceptance relates to developing a mindful relationship with “negative” experiences. Such mindfulness involves accepting negative experiences without judgment, as opposed to denying, rejecting, or ignoring them. In a firm, this process involves accepting failures and disruptions with pragmatism. Acceptance can be difficult to achieve, especially when members feel that environmental demands are threatening the firm or challenging deeply held mindsets and assumptions. Typically, individuals view threats either as calculable risks or as inherent in a complex and uncertain world, and it is human nature to take refuge into denial when under threat. However, to be resilient, an organization must dramatically reduce the time it takes to go from “that can’t be true” to “we must face the world as it is.” Before a firm can effectively respond to environmental demands, its members need to focus on the present moment and accept the need to change.

Finally, *Adapting* involves aligning the firm with the new environmental conditions. When a company fails to adapt to its changing environment, it loses its relevance and ultimately the support of its stakeholders.

#### The InterMune Case

A firm that developed these organizational resilience capabilities was InterMune, a California-based biotechnology company founded in 1998 and centered on pulmonary and

fibriotic diseases and R&D. The company joined the Roche holding when Roche paid a 64% premium to acquire InterMune. From its founding to the 2014 acquisition, InterMune experienced multiple crises. Dan Welch, InterMune’s CEO at the time of the acquisition, stated in a speech in 2014: “I’ve been with the company for a decade and we’ve been through a lot of ups and downs. If we had not been so tough over the years, we would not be where we are. Every single time we get knocked down—every single time—we get up. And we win. That’s who we are.”

Starting in 2004, Dan Welch’s decade at InterMune showed how the company developed and used capabilities for resilience. The “roller-coaster ride” began in 2004, when InterMune’s prior CEO was convicted of a federal crime, and InterMune was involved in a Department of Justice investigation. Disruptions at this point included a leadership crisis, a culture of ethical and legal misconduct, and a strategy with dispersed focus. Again in 2006, InterMune faced a series of adverse conditions, including an incredibly competitive market for HCV therapy for Hepatitis C, the failure of the INSPIRE Phase 3 clinical trial, and FDA’s requirement for an additional phase 3 clinical trial. Moreover, the long existence of multiple cultural factions created a very poor morale and outrageously high turnover among employees. The company was described as a “toxic place” and one having an “accidental culture.” Communicating was very difficult, and lack of respect for laws and regulations as well as among colleagues, tensions and conflicts were engrained in all activities.

In 2005, Welch’s recovery efforts launched a corporate values program to assess InterMune’s values and vision. Representatives from different parts of the company were brought together through grassroots employee-driven programs, which reflected a sense of engagement and ownership throughout the organization. As a result, InterMune embraced the IPACT Values: Integrity, Passion, Accountability, Creativity, and Teamwork.

Furthermore, as Welch described, learning to accept that “when you make dramatic changes, they are often very traumatic” became part of the company’s fabric. For example, InterMune experienced two rounds of layoffs, the first of which resulted in a 50% reduction of the workforce. However, the contingency plans underlying these decisions were implemented with dignity and compassion for staff. As Welch explained: “If you’ve thought through all of the potentially scary things that could realistically happen and figured out how you could mitigate them or survive them, it brings a certain serenity, confidence, and assurance that you will be okay.” Also, InterMune accepted “as exactly the right strategy to follow” a divestiture and commercial downsizing decision that meant the company no longer had products that it had been actively marketing and promoting.

Finally, in terms of adapting, InterMune continuously challenged its strategies as conditions changed or threatened to change. As the Chief Financial Officer reported: “Mr. Fantastic, the Marvel’s Fantastic Four character comes to mind because he can stretch and form, and go high and low, and go wide—in an instant. We at InterMune were a lot like that. We had to be able to adjust, be moldable, make sure that we could be pliable and be able to do certain duties that perhaps we—or anyone—had not done before. We truly modified ourselves to be able to fit whatever the situation was at the time.”



Despite the various crises, InterMune emerged more resilient and a new unique culture was designed that everyone could get behind, embrace, and understand. The new culture reflected integrity, open and honest communication, and a climate of respect as core values that were operationalized in daily life. However, while the core values served as stable anchors during difficult times, InterMune maintained its flexibility and ability to pivot. In fact, striking a balance between continuity and change was its key success driver.

### The Matrix: Integrating the 4Ps and the 3As for Thriving

In this section, we discuss the mutually-reinforcing impact of the 3As and the 4Ps when leveraged together. In the presence

of the 4Ps, each of the 3A processes is executed with an emphasis on growth, vitality and abundance.

When positive leadership resources are present, the process of assessing a crisis becomes more holistic and humanistic, and incorporates a broader set of stakeholders. A positive climate and positive meaning, for example, shape more accurate cognitive maps of what is good and bad in the environment, and help individuals to consider both pros and cons of crises and to establish pragmatic priorities that put people first. As a result, these positive resources prevent members from jumping to a negative view of adversity. Furthermore, positive communication and relationships within the firm promotes a shared vision of the organization transcending adversity.

Accepting the need for change is easier when members view the disruption as a challenge for excellence, growth,

**Table 1** Matrix of Resources and Capabilities for Thriving: The Case of Reuters after 9/11

Reuters	Assessing	Accepting	Adapting
Positive meaning	"This is the Reuters touchstone: to be there for other people. We are there for clients and we are there for our own."	"It's all about the families. Just remember it's all about them."	"You sometimes forget what our company does. Through these events people saw what Reuters does . . . You could see the impact"
Positive climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "People first, then the customers, then the business"</li> <li>- Locate and ensure the safety of Reuters staff first; learn what clients need</li> <li>- Counseling program</li> <li>- Bridge employees expressed gratitude for Reuter's organized help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepting that employees needed to decide if they could stay to help or leave home. Gratitude for this flexibility.</li> <li>- Accepting the help from the London office with relief and gratitude.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "... people who were scared came in and it helped them help each other. It helped them have a purpose, to come together and have a job to do. It helped them have a chance to deal with others about their fear."</li> <li>- Nobody was forced to go restore client services.</li> </ul>
Positive communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Built on the map and guidelines created for the Millennium Project</li> <li>- Break things into pieces, give clear assignments, give accountability, get people involved, often and frequent updates</li> <li>- Command Centers, hot line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepting the need for the CEO to make personally the calls to the homes of the not-yet-located employees.</li> <li>- Town hall meetings to accept feelings of fear.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "We were able to be compassionate, but also talk to people in ways that helped them get back to work and do what it takes" to respond to customers.</li> </ul>
Positive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respect for Reuters director of security, turning to him for input</li> <li>- Relying on networks to locate people, leveraging people in multi-disciplinary teams to quickly locate "hot buttons"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepting the need to respond unequivocally to what the families of missing employees needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They offered everything they could to clients — "we just did what it takes"</li> <li>- Help the clients technically, regardless of cost.</li> </ul>

and learning (as opposed to resisting adversity out of fear). Because they increase members' optimistic and hopeful views regarding the success of their responses to adverse events and the value of learning from the experience, positive meaning and a positive climate enhance the accepting process. Importantly, positive communication and positive relationships are essential for promoting collective acceptance and transitioning toward adaptation, as it is with managing any other type of change.

In the process of adapting, the 4Ps allow for a smooth flow of resources to needed areas. The 4Ps are important to the synchronization of efforts from different parts of a firm. Positive relationships and positive communication, for example, are instrumental to coordination and cooperation. They enable members to make decisions rapidly, think creatively, and improvise flexibly in order to design and implement plans to recover from crises and to improve future response capabilities. They also enable members to notice key resources at their disposal and to leverage them in order to return to, or even improve, normal operations. As firms adapt and change the way they operate a positive climate reminds organizational members of the opportunities ahead and positive meaning focuses them on the long-term impact of their actions.

### **The Reuters Case**

In the matrix in Table 1, we build on the experience of Reuters after 9/11 to show how, by integrating positive leadership resources with resilience capabilities, Reuters was able to exercise greater compassion and agility to shift quickly and respond resiliently in challenging circumstances. Reuters did not just survive, but it gained greater engagement, loyalty, retention, and productivity.

Phil Lynch became CEO of Reuters America on September 1, 2001, just 10 days before the terrorist attacks of September 11. He had been a Reuters employee for more than a dozen years. When Lynch describes the crisis, he states that 9/11 showed employees and clients that Reuters was a company with a soul and a company that put people first.

On 9/11 and the days and weeks that followed, when having to quickly assess the impact of the attacks on the company, the leaders' common reaction was to take care of people first. Leaders understood the need to get back to business, but the priority was to locate all the Reuters employees and to support the families of those employees who died. The response to the families of the deceased was extraordinary. The idea was to "do whatever you could do for these people," from calling a mother who lost her son to remind her to have breakfast to assigning family members a driver for weeks to take them wherever they needed to go. For Lynch, this was important because it told him that if something ever happened to him at work, his family would be taken care of. The compassionate treatment to employees and families created much loyalty to the company.

Leaders accepted that individuals were not all in the emotional state to focus on operations and sent to their homes those employees who were stressed about their families, without holding this against them. This action showed compassion and also business sense, since stressed individuals were not able to contribute effectively. Leaders talked about their emotions and fears, and modelled that emotions and work were not separated.

It is noteworthy that Reuters extended care to everyone, even those employees on the periphery of the organization such as the Bridge Information Systems employees. Reuters had just closed the deal to buy Bridge a few days prior to 9/11. Lynch recognized that Reuters could have tried to renegotiate the deal, since Bridge was not worth the same after 9/11; however, they did not, and Bridge employees were grateful and became very committed to Reuters.

In adapting their operations to get back online, Reuters' employees were empowered to improvise ways to deliver whatever their colleagues and clients required without any concern of costs. The clarity of goals and priorities (employees first, clients second, the business third) allowed people to decentralize and "break the rules" at the margins to serve their stakeholders. At the same time, communication was key so that all parts knew what others were doing, what the goal was, and how they aligned to it. Employees demonstrated distributed leadership, emphasizing how people are Reuters' most important asset.

When layoffs were needed at some point after 9/11, this step came only after employees had given ideas of how to save money and those ideas had been implemented. Lynch reflected that, for layoffs, honest conversations are key, and that people need to be trusted with the truth, because they can handle it. Otherwise, employees speculate and come up with their own reasons for the layoffs. Transparency, consistency, fairness, and dealing with emotions enabled layoffs to be done in a compassionate way.

The lasting effects of 9/11 for Reuters were that the company showed internal and external stakeholders its pragmatic flexibility and its humanity. The collective actions deepened the quality of connections between people. The company gained an increased sense of collective competence and efficacy, having realized what they were capable of doing together.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGERS FOR THE COVID-19 GLOBAL CRISIS**

We have described a framework integrating the resources and capabilities needed for thriving, which is relevant for managers making decisions during the COVID-19 crisis.

In the COVID-19 crisis, the process of assessing is dynamic, and constantly changing. New information is available every day. It is important to be aware of any filters that may lead us to see what we want to see, and to not "shoot the messenger" when "bad news" arrive. Positive communication is open to diverse perspectives and possibilities. Assessment also benefits from promoting mindfulness in individuals and in the culture of the organization. Mindfulness refers to clear-minded attention to and awareness of what is perceived in the present. It helps companies organize themselves in a way that allows them to notice the unexpected and prevent or contain its further development; if they are unable to prevent or contain the problem, they focus on swift restoration.

The magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis has been difficult to accept for individuals and collectives. Letting go of how societies and organizations have worked for decades in modern history has been problematic for many, both personally and professionally. Positive meaning is key to

embrace the idea that “the only thing to fear is fear itself,” and that “change is continuous.” Like the cases of EDSI and Reuters showed vividly, going back to the values of the companies (“Show up, Smile, Support”, “people first, clients second”) is a source of hope and courage, and also of gratitude and appreciation.

Adapting to the “new reality” of COVID-19 requires improvisation, engagement, and empowerment. Business models are being put upside down. Tele-working while home-schooling is making us question our priorities and asking what we have in us. It certainly requires us to show up to our lives in a different way. Managers need to consider that new needs are emerging, both from employees and from clients. What are those new needs that need to be served, and how can organizations serve those new needs? Tapping into the creative power at all levels of the organization will enable those solutions to emerge.

“Putting people first” may seem a contradictory prescription in COVID-19 times, when society is discussing the trade-off between personal safety and health versus opening businesses and getting back to work. However, the dichotomy between people and business is a false one. Like the case of Reuters shows, it makes business sense to put people first. The job of leaders is to get the best out of people, and to reach inside of them. The greatest asset is a network of passionate people who will do whatever it takes for a company and its clients (this is the opposite of the 9-to-5 mentality). But, how do we get people to do more than they

think they can do, if we don’t put people first? In the case of “essential businesses,” this means taking care of these employees, who are taking risks daily. We have learned of strikes from supermarket employees complaining of their working conditions during the COVID-19 crisis. These employees do not feel a high-quality relationship with their companies, no sense of loyalty exists, and the employee is certainly not giving him or her best. In the case of “non-essential businesses,” which have had to remain closed, putting people first means to consider layoffs only as the last resort. This is the time to tap into individuals’ creativity and ingenuity and to ask them for any ideas for savings, and for new ways to serve employees and customers. Companies, such as Lincoln Electric, have a long history of protecting employment by using mechanisms such as temporary pay cuts, rotations, flexible assignments, or reduced hours. The belief is that a company is better off if employees view their relationship with the firm as something more than contractual.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

We offer our matrix of positive leadership resources (4Ps) and organizational resilience capabilities (3As) as a practical tool for leaders to map a social infrastructure that helps them to design organizations that thrive despite adversity.





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For more on EDSI, see the "Thrive in Trying Times Teach-Out" from the Center for Positive Organizations.

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